

News Item

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Albina Ministerial Alliance (AMA) Coalition for Justice and Police Reform
and Portland Copwatch

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ANALYSIS:

TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN STOP DATA STILL SHOW BIAS AGAINST PEOPLE OF
COLOR, AMA COALITION, PORTLAND COPWATCH FIND

In mid-May, 2012, the Portland Police Bureau released the traffic and pedestrian stop data for Portland in the year 2010. Despite the "Plan to Address Racial Profiling" being adopted by City Council in September, 2009, and pledges to improve the "hit rate"-- that is, if people are stopped and searched, the searches should turn up contraband at the same rates regardless of the ethnicity of the drivers-- the AMA Coalition for Justice and Police Reform and Portland Copwatch have found that the numbers have not improved, and may be getting worse.

While the common indicator, the higher number of traffic stops of African Americans compared to their representation in the population, continues to be irregularly high-- 11% of stops vs. 6% of the population-- the police argue that due to factors about who is driving in what areas at what time of day can skew the numbers. They also say officers can't always see what race the person is who is driving. (This does not explain why the pedestrian stop data, released since 2006, continually show African Americans stopped at 3-4 times their representation in the population.)

To offset this criticism, the keys to analyzing the traffic stops data, made available by the Bureau annually since 2004, are to look at the most important part of the incidents after the stops, searches and whether any illegal items are found.

First, dividing the number of discretionary searches (ie, not inventory searches required when towing a car) into the number of total stops for particular ethnic groups.

The percentage of African Americans and Latinos who are searched after being stopped continues to be over twice as high as the percentage of whites who are searched.

African Americans in 2010: 14.5% of people stopped were searched

Latinos in 2010: 11.4% of people stopped were searched

Whites in 2010: 6.5% of people stopped were searched

While the overall percentage of people being searched has gone down since 2004 (from about 12% & 25% to about 7% and 15%), the proportion of Portlanders of color searched remains

twice as high as white people searched.

Second, dividing the number of times contraband is found on people in each ethnic group by the number of searches of that group.

The percentage of African Americans and Latinos found to have illegal drugs, weapons, alcohol, or other contraband is about 7/10 as high as the percentage of whites found with the same kinds of items:

African Americans in 2010: 26.1% of searches turned up contraband

Latinos in 2010: 23.7% of searches turned up contraband

Whites in 2010: 36.2% of searches turned up contraband

The highest average "hit rate" for people of color was 83% in 2006, but in 2010 it was just 69%, indicating that police are searching people of color far more often than they are finding anything illegal on them.

In other words, not only is the "hit rate" not improving, it is getting worse.

It is possible that some of the changes are due to the increased number of "unknown" race being reported by officers at the initial stops, which has climbed from 4% in 2004 to 29% in 2010.

The AMA Coalition and Portland Copwatch have been demanding improvements in how police make choices to stop and search people in Portland for many years, most intently since the Racial Profiling Committee was convened by Mayor Potter in 2007-2008. That Committee was dissolved and its charge taken over by the Human Rights Commission's Community and Police Relations Committee (CPRC). CPRC will be looking at the statistics next Wednesday, June 20th, at their monthly meeting. The AMA Coalition and Portland Copwatch will present their findings to the CPRC at that time.

(See the attached chart for a graphic representation of the data.)

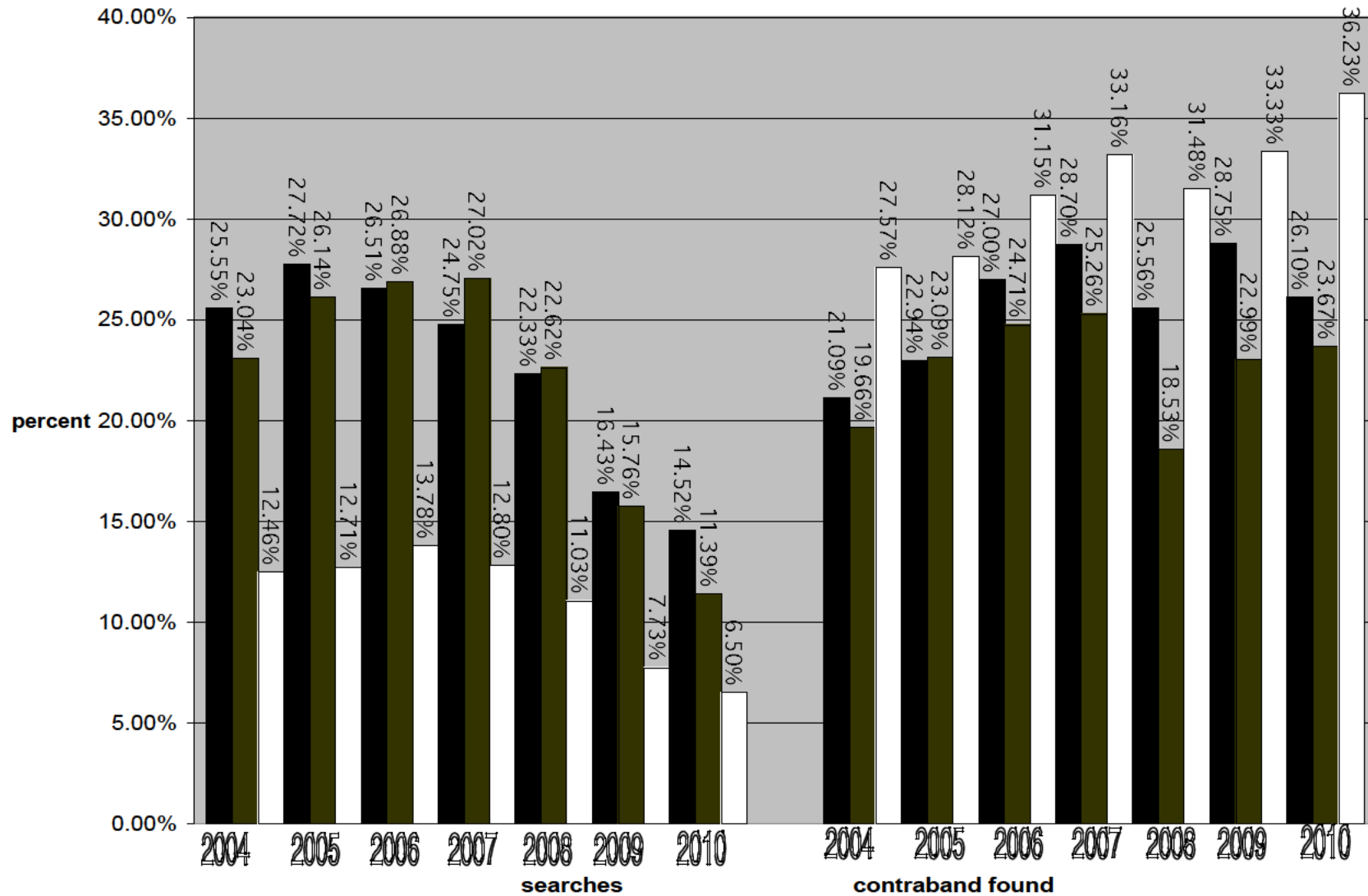
JoAnn Hardesty and Dan Handelman are members of the Steering Committee of the Albina Ministerial Alliance (AMA) Coalition for Justice and Police Reform. Handelman is also a founding member of Portland Copwatch.

The AMA Coalition has been organizing around issues of police use of deadly force and racial profiling in various forms since 2001, most notably around the deaths of Kendra James (2003) and Aaron Campbell (2010). Portland Copwatch is a civilian group promoting police accountability through citizen action since 1992.

More on the AMA: www.albinaministerialcoalition.org

More on Portland Copwatch: www.portlandcopwatch.org

Profiling data 04_10



■ African Americans

■ Latinos

□ Whites